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31 May 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL BULL

SUBJECT: Soviet Aircraft Production Estimates

1. As you remember, the Symington Committee requested that by the end of May they be provided with agreed figures on the cumulative production totals for BEAR, FARMER and FLASHLIGHT aircraft. In addition, since the DCI's testimony was given, new evidence has suggested that BISON production estimates should be revised. I therefore requested that ORR and AFOIN provide me with up-to-date production estimates for these four aircraft in the light of all new evidence, particularly that acquired from the practise fly-by's in Moscow during April. ORR estimates were made available on 18 May, AFOIN estimates on 24 May.

2. Fighter production, cumulative to 1 April 1956:

	<u>ORR</u>	<u>AFOIN</u>
FARMER	440	760
FLASHLIGHT	440	637

These aircraft are being produced at former FRESCO plants. The differences in the estimates stem primarily from the fact that AFOIN is carrying production forward at roughly the same rate as FRESCO, whereas ORR, noting that FARMER and FLASHLIGHT are heavier and more complex than FRESCO, has reduced the rate.

3. Recommendation: Fighter production does not appear to be an issue of primary importance to the Symington Committee. Furthermore, even the ORR figures result in a total production sufficient to account for the in-units figure submitted by AFOIN for NIE 11-4-56 (800 all-weather fighters, including FARMER, FLASHLIGHT and FRESCO "D", as of mid-1956). Therefore I recommend that we not attempt to reconcile the differences at the present time, and that we submit the following to the Symington Committee:

Cumulative Production to 1 April 1956
 FARMER - in the range of 450 to 750
 FLASHLIGHT - in the range of 450 to 650

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4. Heavy Bomber Production: Both ORR and AFOIN have re-evaluated their cumulative evidence of heavy bomber production in the light of data acquired from the May Day practice fly-by's, with ORR making drastic changes in production estimates and AFOIN making relatively minor adjustments. For comparative purposes, the former and revised estimates of cumulative production are shown below:

	<u>Former Estimate</u> <u>to 1 April 1956</u>		<u>New Estimate</u> <u>to 1 April 1956</u>		<u>New Estimate</u> <u>to 1 July 1956</u>	
	ORR	AFOIN	ORR	AFOIN	ORR	AFOIN
			(approx.)			
BISON	100 ¹	100 ¹	41 ²	100	57 ²	131
BEAR	7 ³	110	13 ³	70 ⁴	28 ³	106

Footnotes:

1. On 23 April the Symington Committee was told by the DCI that approx. 100 BISON had been produced through 1 April 1956.

2. Includes 3 prototype aircraft built before initiation of series production.

3. Includes at least 7 experimental or limited series produced aircraft built before initiation of full-scale production.

The differences between the current ORR and AFOIN estimates stem from many factors, but primarily from AFOIN's practice of relating hard evidence to production capabilities and estimated military requirements. My summary of these differences, based on discussions with AFOIN, ORR, and OCI, is available in the Reading Room. In general, it appears to me that the ORR figures adhere closely to what the hard evidence will support. AFOIN's higher estimate adjusts the hard evidence to estimated production capabilities and estimated military requirements. While the ORR estimate seems to reflect all the available bits and pieces of evidence, AFOIN argues that certain of these bits and pieces could be misleading and should neither be taken at face value nor be given as much weight as ORR gives them.

5. Recommendation: The differences in these estimates are critical, both for purposes of reporting to the Symington Committee and for the preparation of NIE 11-4-56. I do not believe we can give the Symington Committee a set of figures ranging between the ORR and AFOIN estimates,

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without at least indicating which is the more likely order of magnitude, since the Committee has already been given an ostensibly firm figure on the BISON and since the two figures are so far apart in each case. For NIE 11-4-56, the AFOIN production figures will support AFOIN's in-units estimate of 80 BISON and 80 BEAR as of mid-1956. The OPR production figures, which are in line with unit training evidence, will not. Therefore I recommend that the Symington Committee be informed that new evidence on both the BISON and BEAR is not yet fully analyzed, and that problems of analysis preclude our submitting additional figures on heavy bomber production until completion of NIE 11-4-56 in late June or July.

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